

# The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism

## Nationalism and Sport

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## Chapter 22: Nationalism and Sport

In June 2004, the football European Championships were played in Portugal. England had qualified for the competition earlier in the year and popular hopes were extremely high that England could win this tournament, its first such victory since the World Cup of 1966. As anticipation for the tournament gathered in May, small Cross of St George flags, flying from plastic attachments, started to appear on car roofs. The flags fluttered patriotically as the fans inside drove proudly across England. Their numbers swelled to reach a climax during the tournament itself - and England's disappointing performance in it. By June, it was impossible to undertake a journey of any length in England without seeing the Cross of St George waving furiously from a passing car. Perhaps symbolically, the plastic attachments which held the flags onto the cars broke regularly and, during the tournament, England's roads were littered with white and red flags, muddled and ripped as they were routinely run over by the wheels of other passing cars. Even after the end of the tournament throughout July and into August, the odd tattered and faded flag could still be seen flying hopefully. For those brief summer months, these flags were a powerful statement of national pride and solidarity. These car-borne flags symbolized the England team and affirmed the pride which was embodied by the three lions on the England team shirt. Interestingly, they were not limited to the masculine fans from the fragmented working class, which had been football's central audience up to the 1990s, but were affixed to the cars of professional groups, including those of women. In every city - and in every area of every city - the flags were ubiquitous. This intense public interest in the England team was particularly noticeable given the nature of the tournament. Although the World Cup had routinely attracted the interest of those who did not follow the club game, and England's victory in 1966 had been the spark of national celebration, the European Championship was a tournament which had attracted only limited public interest in England. Indeed, even the European Championship of 1996 (hosted by England) inspired more circumscribed public interest. The car flags of 2004 demonstrated the new position of football in English social life. In England, football has become a shared

public ritual which is central to popular imagination across the social hierarchy. Even a tournament of traditionally moderate attraction now inspires an intense expression of national sentiment. Yet, just as football now attracts a different kind of audience than had previously been the case, the nationalism which this audience espouses had also changed. The England flags which fluttered from cars throughout June 2004 may have been trivial gestures of enthusiasm [p. 250 ↓ ] but they marked out a reformed national community in response to the new flows of transnational capital. These flags denoted the outline of a new form of nationalism in England.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the way that the transformation of English nationalism can be plotted through the activities of football fans. England and, indeed, the summer months of 2004 are the exclusive focus of attention. Although the peculiarities of English nationalism must be recognized, there are manifest advantages in concentrating on a single case when considering nationalism. A detailed, ideographic approach illuminates the precise social processes by which social groups imagine themselves as national communities. These communities emerge, after all, out of face-to-face interactions. Consequently, a grounded, ethnographic approach ultimately provides a more adequate theoretical account of nationalism than sweeping abstractions. Moreover, once the precise processes are identified in relation to English nationalism, they can be mapped onto other national communities and the way fans in those countries express themselves through sport. In this way, the differentiated responses of national communities and the alternative forms which they have adopted in the face of new conditions can be identified. At the same time, the underlying processes of change can also be recognized. Thus, the national communities which are imagined by football fans across the world are also changing. Like England, these imagined communities are undergoing a dual process of change: they are becoming simultaneously more local and more transnational. This chapter hints only briefly at how other national communities are changing but the example of England may provide a model for tracking these wider changes.

It is important to recognize that national identity is a collective concept which is mobilized situationally. In changing circumstances, different kinds of groupings will appeal to different concepts of nationality to unify themselves. Consequently, although the transformation of national identity may be evident in the ritual of sport, it does not automatically follow that this identity will be reflected in all other spheres of social

activity. No direct transposition can be assumed. Nevertheless, while football fans constitute one social group in a specific circumstance, it seems highly likely that changes in national identity in this sphere of activity will be paralleled, in admittedly differentiated ways, in other areas of social practice.

## Theorizing the Nation

In his now seminal work on nationalism, Benedict Anderson (1990) argued that nations were 'imagined communities'. By this he did not mean that nations were mythical or false communities which did not really exist. On the contrary, nations are among the most real and powerful forms of social group in the modern world. For Anderson, the concept of 'imagined community' pointed to the process by which a nation - and indeed any social group - comes into being. In order for a nation to exist, its members must recognize their common bond to each other. They must understand that they share a special relationship which gives them certain shared interests on the basis of which they will commit themselves to common courses of action. They must imagine a special duty to each other on the basis of which they subsequently act. The act of creating a nation is then an act of understanding - or imagination - but once humans recognize their membership of a special national community, this group is real. It is important to recognize that, while human imagination or understanding is critical to the creation of national communities, imagination alone is not enough. In order for national communities to emerge, the members of these communities need to interact with each other on a regular basis. More particularly, they need to interact with each other as a specifically national community. Although Anderson cites neither, his argument accords almost exactly with the claims of Weber and Durkheim. Weber (1968) famously claimed that in order for a social group to come into being, its members had to engage in exclusive social interaction with no extrinsic purpose. To form a group, individuals had to gather in exclusive moments to affirm their special [p. 251 ↓] relationship to each other. Durkheim's analysis (1964) of aboriginal religion made a parallel argument. For aboriginal clans to exist, the members of these tribes had to gather periodically and affirm their special bond of unity to each other ecstatically. The recognition of the group requires actual practices and, above all, powerful and exclusive social interaction between the members of a group.

Although less dramatic, Anderson identifies a daily ritual as an exclusive period of interaction which has been critical to the creation of imagined national communities. Each morning the members of a nation have opened the same newspapers over their breakfast and this geographically diverse ritual has unified the nation around the key issues which confront it. The newspaper has created common understandings and shared interests which have unified members of a national community even though they have never nor will ever meet. Of course, although the majority of individuals in a national community will never meet, each is embedded in a web of social relations interlocked with others, all employing the newspaper as a shared resource and all discussing the newspaper with each other during the day to confirm communal understandings of it. The newspaper becomes a common symbol employed across a nexus of interlocking interactions which unify individuals within particular groups. Each group is, in turn, interconnected with others into broad social networks; families and neighbours are simultaneously embedded in professional groups or groups unified around forms of leisure activity. Consequently, by means of these interconnections, the newspaper becomes a shared resource across a very wide social network as individuals interact with others in other groups who in turn interact with others. Eventually, a broad set of understandings is established across an entire nation and continually re-established every day through a myriad of apparently trivial interactions. 'Interaction rituals' are, in fact, the basis of imagined communities. Apparently trivial everyday, face-to-face encounters are critical to the creation and maintenance of national communities. Only insofar as these webs of relations continue to affirm a sense of common destiny does the nation persist. Members of a nation must be continually - albeit briefly - reminded of their special relationship to one another.

Sport is sociologically important to nationalism because it constitutes a charged interaction ritual out of which imagined national communities arise (King 1998; 2003). Certainly, sport is not the only, nor the most important, ritual which affirms the networks that constitute a nation, but it is among the most striking in contemporary society. The England flags which appeared on cars before and during the European Championships of 2004 become socially significant in the light of Anderson's discussion of nationalism. These flags constituted an important interaction ritual which expressed and affirmed the idea of England as a national community in the twenty-first century. In placing a flag on their car, English people announced their support of the English team but this statement

was not individualistic, aimed at expressing merely personal pride. It was directed in the first instance at other, mostly anonymous, people past whom these flag-bearers drove and was aimed at communicating a sense of solidarity with them. Those who put a flag on their car knew that others would understand the meaning of this symbol and respond to it in the appropriate way. This flag focused communal attention on the English football team and expressed the shared hopes which the English had for them. In the weeks before and during the tournament, a previously meaningless encounter with another car driver became a shared act of solidarity; it became an interaction ritual. The mundane reality of traffic was transformed into a sacred, though brief, communion. As cars drove past each other, eyes would turn to the others' flag and each person would be communally oriented to a single idea - England. Like Anderson's newspaper reader, the unconscionable myriad of trivial flag-encounters germinated a fluid and complex network; a recognizable social community, involving millions of individuals, who understood themselves to be English and were all communally oriented to the same end.

In the current era, as the flows of global capital subvert national boundaries, promoting [p. 252 ↓] uneven development, and transforming even the most intimate relations, new social groups are emerging while other long established groups are having to re-negotiate themselves. Nations are currently being re-invented and re-imagined in the face of the new economic pressures to which social groups are being submitted. In his work on changing forms of identity, Appadurai has emphasized the increasing significance of the locale. The locale - the local city or region - has become a means by which corporate capital has disguised its increasingly anonymous and globalized operations. Appadurai overstates the Deterritorialization of capital but his argument about the growing importance of the locale is relevant to contemporary discussions about nationalism. Nationalism is changing in the face of global pressures and is, perhaps ironically, becoming more local in response to these external pressures. Under the uneven pressure of globalization, formerly unified national identities have been increasingly fissured by new regionalized nationalities (Keating 1998; Jenkins and Sofos 1996). In Europe today, the transition of national communities is particularly obvious in the appearance of new forms of national groupings in Central and Eastern Europe as states fail, most obviously in the former Yugoslavia (Kaldor 1999). However, it is an error to believe that national communities are undergoing change only in those areas

where there has been a radical collapse of the state. The same forces of globalization which led to the collapse of Yugoslavia are also transforming apparently stable nations. Nations that centralized during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries like Italy and Spain are beginning to decentralize once again and even a nation like Britain, which has been unified since 1707, is undergoing a degree of fragmentation. New forms of solidarities - new 'national' communities - are emerging in Europe, especially in those dynamic regions which have been constrained by backward or exploiting nation-states such as north-western Italy (see Mingione 1993), Catalonia or Scotland. The rise of these new communities is propelled by a national system of regulation which jeopardizes their participation in the global economy (Sheridan 1995; Sznajder 1995). As global forces are channelled towards different regions, former national solidarities begin to have less importance in certain contexts as new collective interests, mobilizing around re-invented notions of the nation, have come to the fore.

In this historic moment, it has been relatively easy for those disadvantaged regions to construct a new identity for themselves. Emergent national communities like Scotland and Wales constitute themselves in opposition to an oppressive and colonizing England. They draw on the history of their resistance to the centralizing authority of the English monarchy and state. For the English, it is more difficult to define themselves in this era (Nairn 1981). England's identity was based specifically on the Union which the English created through military conquest. English identity was consequently indivisible from British identity. The English defined themselves precisely by being British and dominating an island empire, comprising Scotland, Wales and Ireland. As Britain is breaking up under the force of global markets into its constituent and re-emergent national communities, England's national identity has become deeply problematic for, unlike Scotland, Wales and Ireland, there is no obvious identity which the English should adopt. Historically, English national identity was ironically defined by not being English; it was a pride in Britain. Now thrown back on itself, it is difficult for the English to establish an identity for themselves since their history up to this point has always been a story of their role in the creation of Britain. In his great novel, *A Man Without Qualities*, Robert Musil (1995) noted that on the eve of the First World War, Austria faced the same dilemma. Austria was defined by being the ruler of the Austro-Hungarian empire. It was therefore defined ironically by not being itself but in consisting of other nations. Its identity was hollow, consisting only of otherness which



it could not claim as its own. Musil exposes this crisis of identity with the parody of the Parallel Campaign. The Campaign was intended to organize celebrations for the 70th anniversary of Emperor Josef in 1918, in response to Germany's plans to have a jubilee to celebrate Emperor Wilhelm II's 30th jubilee. However, [p. 253 ↓ ] although the committee was initially inspired by 'the Great Idea', it was unable to identify a single characteristic that defined Austrian identity. Its celebration of Austria was entirely vacuous.

This sense of the Austro-Hungarian states was so oddly put together that it must seem almost hopeless to explain it to anyone who has not experienced it himself. It did not consist of an Austrian part and a Hungarian part that, as one might expect, complemented each other, but of a whole and a part; that is, of a Hungarian and an Austro-Hungarian sense of statehood, the latter to be found in Austria, which in a sense left the Austrian sense of statehood with no country of its own. (Musil 1995: 180)

The current search for English identity (Kumar 2003; Paxman 1999; Scruton 2000) resonates with Musil's parody - albeit less amusingly. Like Austria, England must re-invent itself as its historic conflation with Britain is becoming increasingly problematic. English identity must be defined against Scottish, Welsh and Irish identity when it was once defined precisely as the domination and incorporation of these communities. The concept of Britain has become a problematic solidarity in the 1990s. Britain is not an irrelevance at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but the conflation of England, Scotland, Wales and (more problematically) Northern Ireland is now a matter of dispute. The novel use of England flags during the 2004 European Championships constitutes a new interaction ritual in which English people strive to constitute themselves as a distinctive national community at a deeply ambiguous moment.

Global forces are promoting the development of new kinds of national communities. New kinds of social solidarities are appearing across the world under the name of nationalism. Although geographically differentiated, these new nationalisms involve two fundamental processes. National communities are becoming more local. The nations which were established from the end of the nineteenth century are contracting, as regions within them devolve from centralized state authority. They are concentrating



onto a more geographically circumscribed, core group. Simultaneously, emergent national communities are becoming more transnational. These contracted national groupings - or the new nations based on once-repressed ethnic groups and regions - employ much wider criteria of membership; the nation is expanding globally across its own borders which are themselves increasingly penetrated by economic traffic and population movements. Many people are now included in the new localized national communities who once did not qualify as nationals. In the globalized world, the nation is becoming more local and more transnational. It is ironically both contracting and concentrating while also expanding and diversifying. These processes of localization and transnationalization are evident in the attempts of the English to constitute themselves as a new national community in the face of new global pressures. The European Championships of 2004 provide a convenient focus through which the re-invention of English nationalism can be observed.

## The New Localism

Before the 1990s, travelling England fans preferred the Union Jack (a red, white and blue flag comprising the crosses of England, Scotland and Ireland) for display within the stadium. Union flags, often with the name of the local club imprinted horizontally, were draped over hoardings, barriers and fences in support of the national team. At the now famous World Cup semi-final against Germany in Turin in 1990, in which England was eventually eliminated on penalties, television broadcasts showed the England fans chiefly waving the Union Jack, with only a few St George's flags in evidence. In the course of the 1990s, however, England fans have increasingly preferred to use the red and white Cross of St George. This flag denotes a specifically English identity. The St George's Cross fuses with the Scottish Cross of St Andrew and the Irish Cross of St Patrick to create the Union Jack, but alone it stands exclusively for England - a national community without its own state. The use of the Cross of St George for the car flags in the summer of 2004 reflects [p. 254 ↓] the increasing weight which is being attached exclusively to England.

It is interesting that English football strips have also reflected this growth of distinctive English identity. Since the first England international match against Scotland in 1872, England football teams have traditionally played in white with blue shorts and white

socks. The choice of white seems to have been a direct response to the fact that Scotland chose dark blue - the background colour of the Cross of St Andrew - as their shirt colour. Scotland wore white shorts and blue socks. England, therefore, seemed to have selected white on the basis that it was the matching opposite of Scotland's colours. In the 1930s, a red away strip was introduced and red has remained England's usual alternative colour. The World Cup winning team of 1966 famously played in red because opponents West Germany also played in white. Red and white have continued as the favoured colours for England up to the present. However, there has been a significant change in the design of the shirt in the past decade, particularly with regard to the secondary shirt colours.

From 1974 until 1980s, English football strips, produced by a company called Admiral, were predominantly white but the subordinate colourings, around the shoulder and chest, were blue and red. Alternatively, on the red England shirt of the early 1980s, the trimming was white and blue. In this way, the football shirt referenced the red, white and blue Union Jack as a common symbol. The strips made an important symbolic point. They represented a conflation of English and British identity which was unproblematic at the time; for the English, England and Britain were synonymous and English national identity was founded on an idea of Britain as a unified state. The England strip corresponded with the Union flags which the fans waved from the terraces.

In 1984 the sports manufacturer Umbro won the contract for the England strip, which it retains to this day. Reflecting the Admiral design, Umbro shirts were white, with only a small blue and sometimes blue and red collar, referencing the Union Jack - but only minimally. Significantly, from 1997, the Umbro design changed. Although red and blue stripes were inserted on the flanks, a small but prominent Cross of St George flag appeared on the trim at the neck-opening of the shirt, near the middle of the player's chest.<sup>1</sup> In later shirts the Cross of St George has become an even more central motif. For instance, in 2001 Umbro launched their new England strip on St George's Day itself and the shirt made an explicit reference to the English saint with a bold red line running down the left-hand side of the shirt (over the player's heart). From 2003 a new England white strip was introduced and the Cross of St George theme persisted. The red line, representing the Cross, now runs across the shoulders. Similarly, the new red

away strip introduced in 2004 repeats the earlier design. A Cross of St George flag was prominently displayed on each shoulder while a third cross was sewn into the lining of the shirt just below the neck so it was visible when the shirt was not being worn. In these new England Umbro designs the white shorts have similarly referenced the Cross of St George by featuring a red stripe. The strip symbolizes the transformation of English national identity in the era of globalization. England players no longer play in the Union Jack as they did in the 1970s and 1980s, but in the exclusively English Cross of St George.

Significantly, the use of the St George Cross seems to accord with public self-understandings and identities. The Umbro shirt design has been very successful as sales indicate. For instance, the new red away strip, released in March 2002, was bought by four times as many fans in three months as the previous away shirt in its entire two-year life span. It also outsold the England home shirt launched in April 2001.<sup>2</sup> The St George Cross design is manifestly attractive to England fans, reflecting their own sense of identity and the way they understand themselves as England fans. The new England shirt design symbolizes changes in national affiliation, but Umbro's marketing strategy also usefully illustrates how the processes of globalization encourage the formation of new national communities.

In his work on globalization and identity, Appadurai (1996) identifies an important [p. 255 ↓] process. The operations of increasingly transnational companies do not mean the end of the locale. On the contrary, the competitive global market promotes and supports increasing mobilization and identification at the level of the locale. The England football team represents exactly this process. Since the 1980s, sport has become an essential commodity for the media and other sponsoring interests to expand their markets and sustain their profits in an increasingly competitive global economy. In the case of England, the expression of a new national identity which attracts fans is directly in the interests of these corporations. Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB television network, *The Times* and the *Sun* newspapers (which are part of his News International conglomerate) have been central to this process. BSkyB was the product of a merger in 1990 between Murdoch's Sky Television and British Satellite Broadcasting and BSkyB's rise to national and increasingly transnational dominance is primarily due to its monopoly of the rights to Premier League football from the first contract in 1993 to

the current date (see Chippendale and Franks 1992; King 1998). Murdoch's media corporations have promoted English football to a position of cultural dominance which it has never experienced before. As Murdoch has himself emphasized: 'Sport absolutely overpowers film and everything else in the entertainment genre [and] football, of all sports, is number one' (Rupert Murdoch, cited in Guest and Law 1997: 24). Sport is then, to use Murdoch's term, a 'battering ram' by which commercial interests can break into and indeed create new markets (Harveson 1996). In England, the global competition between emergent transnational corporations like Murdoch's News International has promoted football and stimulated the development of re-invented local and national communities around this transformed ritual. The promotion of new national identities by multinational corporations is recognized explicitly by these companies themselves. Martin Prothero, Head of Marketing and International at UMBRO International, conveniently demonstrated the point when he discussed the success of the new red England shirt during the World Cup in June 2002. 'A combination of a fantastic product design and value for money pricing, allied to England's success on the field, has led to vast numbers of fans wanting to show their support by wearing our England products. Let's hope the team can keep going in the World Cup and generate even more excitement and support around the country!'.<sup>3</sup> England success - and the nationalist solidarity which that success stimulates - is directly in the interests of Umbro. The competitive global economy does not mean the end of nationalism. On the contrary, as they develop their markets, multinationals actively promote national solidarities and identities in new localized forms. Umbro's new England shirts symbolize the transformation of English national identity in the era of globalization. As Great Britain has been compromised by global economic pressures, English people have mobilized themselves around the concept of a new localized national identity.

Yet, this is only one side of the current process. Emergent social groups are not only promoted by globalization - they are also threatened by these forces. New social groups emerge as a means of collectively resisting the uneven development initiated by globalization. Appadurai has called this resistance, which often takes the form of violence, the 'ugly face' of globalization (Appadurai 1996:42). There is an ugly side to new English nationalism which attempts to resist the threat posed by the new power of commercial forces. In England, this resistance to and resentment of global forces has been consistently focused on a single football player: David Beckham. He is seen

to represent the very commercial forces which have both brought the new English community into existence but have also threatened its world status. For much of his time as a Manchester United player, David Beckham was subjected to barracking and verbal abuse by opposition fans, focusing specifically on his - and his wife's - financial status. He was explicitly seen as a product of threatening corporate forces. The barracking was not limited to club fixtures but was also a common occurrence at England games, when he was supposedly representing the nation. Certainly his dismissal against Argentina in the 1998 World Cup increased this abuse, but that dismissal was [p. 256 ↓ ] itself invested with decisive significance because Beckham had already been identified as a problematic figure. Thus, in the important qualifying game against Finland on 24 March 2001, which was played at Anfield (Liverpool), a significant portion of the previews of the game focused on the issue of whether Beckham, as captain, would be barracked by England fans. In 2002, when Beckham ensured England's qualification for the World Cup almost single-handedly, the abuse against him declined. However, his move to Real Madrid in 2003 and his decline in playing form for England has once again stimulated increasing antipathy towards him by England fans. Once again, the accusations against him highlight his commercial corruption: his poor form is not explained in sporting terms, it is not the product of injury or fatigue, it is seen as specifically a result of his lack of pride in England. He has played poorly for England, so the accusation goes, because he is more concerned with money, sponsorship and the rankly venal Real Madrid than with his nation. He is seen as a representative of global corporate forces and is, therefore, a danger to national integrity. Illustrating his corrupting commercial influence, a story was circulated among (and deplored by) England fans that David Beckham had asked that England wear the all-white strip (the colours of his new club, Real Madrid), in his first match in England after his transfer from Manchester United, and, so it was alleged, the Football Association had acceded to his request.<sup>4</sup> It is unclear whether this story is true, but it demonstrates that fans believe that Beckham represents a corrupting commercial presence. It is instructive to compare Beckham's treatment by England fans with that of Kevin Keegan in the late 1970s. As a player, Keegan was at least as successful an international star as Beckham and he also benefited commercially from football. He became extremely wealthy and like Beckham he made a high profile move abroad - to SV Hamburg - on a lucrative contract. There is little doubt that Keegan was as interested in financial remuneration as Beckham. Nevertheless, his loyalty to England was never questioned

and, especially in an era of very poor England team performances, he was supported by the fans as a figurehead. In the current globalized era, Beckham, in contrast, as the abuse he receives demonstrates, is widely looked upon with suspicion even though there is no evidence that he is any less committed to England on the field. In this globalized context, certain players, like Beckham, represent precisely the commercial forces that threaten localized national communities, and they become figures of hate. In the face of new global forces, localized national identities are emerging in new kinds of public rituals. Through these new localized identities, groups are collectively mobilizing themselves to exploit the opportunities of globalization while they also resist the threats it poses. Localism has two sides.

## Transnationalism

In the ritual of football, the localization of national identity is evident. However, this localization involves a further element. As nations concentrate, they simultaneously expand globally, seeking support and members from populations in other parts of the world. These localized nations consist paradoxically of increasingly diverse population groupings. This dialectic is reflected in sport, in general, and in football, in particular. In 1966, England won the World Cup with a team which was socially homogeneous. It consisted of white players all of whom came from urban, working-class backgrounds, and all of whom played exclusively for English professional clubs: Banks (Leicester), Cohen (Fulham), Wilson (Everton), Stiles (Manchester United), Jack Charlton (Leeds), Moore (West Ham), Peters (West Ham), Ball (Blackpool), Hunt (Liverpool), Bobby Charlton (Manchester United), and Hurst (West Ham). They were from England and played in England. Since that time the demographic basis of the national team has changed, reflecting in particular widespread immigration into Britain from the 1950s. The England team which lost to Portugal in the semi-final of Euro 2004 featured four black players (James, Campbell, [p. 257 ↓] Cole and Vassell). In addition, although England football professionals migrate less than their European counterparts, the defeated Euro 2004 side included two notable émigrés: David Beckham and Owen Hargreaves who played for Real Madrid and Bayern Munich, respectively, though Michael Owen and Jonathon Woodgate also transferred to Real Madrid in the summer after Euro 2004. Owen Hargreaves is especially interesting because he has never played in England and



is Canadian by birth and, therefore, he would not have qualified to play for England in the past. He represents transnationalization at its extreme; he has virtually no concrete connection to England.

There is further evidence of this process of transnationalization. Until 1999, England had always been managed by an Englishman and, indeed, it would have been regarded as inappropriate for the national team to be managed by anyone other than a national. In the face of increased international competition, these nationalist principles have been compromised. As a result of poor performances under a series of English managers throughout the 1990s, culminating with Kevin Keegan, the Football Association prioritized results over national purity, and appointed the Swede Sven Goran Eriksson in January 2001. Interestingly, Eriksson had never even coached an English club side but came to the attention of the FA due to his success over a 15-year period in international club football, including a League Championship (Scudetto) with the Italian club, Lazio. Significantly, there was initially intense opposition from some fans and from certain elements of the press. On his arrival at FA headquarters in London, for instance, a Union Jack-clad individual protested with a banner which read 'FA - Hang your heads in shame' (Winter 2001). It was significant that the fan wore a Union Jack. He represented an increasingly outmoded British nationalism whose exclusiveness undermined national competitiveness in a globalized era. The appointment of Eriksson as a manager represented a transnationalization of the England team. In the face of new pressures, the Football Association sought to exploit the potential of the global market to promote the national team, seeking new alliances irrespective of traditional solidarities and cultural boundaries.

Under the managers of the 1990s, and Kevin Keegan in particular, England employed crude tactics which reflected the insular national style of fast and aggressive rather than skilful football. Keegan also favoured older players, most of whom had become professionals in the 1980s before the deregulation and globalization of the game. These players were educated in increasingly anachronistic styles of English professionalism. Although Eriksson's period as England manager has not been without its problems and England still fail to reach the level of the best international teams, Eriksson has employed young players and has greatly improved the tactics of the England team. They are now a more professional and more tactically astute team than they were throughout the 1990s and have begun to adopt a style of play which accords more



closely with that employed by other international sides. England has thus become a more transnational team both in terms of players and style of play.

The process of transnationalization is demonstrated by other national sides. Indeed, other teams have transnationalized more radically and far more successfully than England. While the French national league is extremely weak due to now obsolete business structures, the national team was very successful in the late 1990s and early 2000s. France's victory in Euro 2000 and their earlier success in the World Cup Final in 1998 was substantially due to the transnationalization of the national team. A notable feature of the French team was how many players were drawn from France's former colonies, including one of the world's greatest players, Zinedine Zidane, who is of Algerian descent. While Jean Marie Le Pen's French National Front rejected the national team for its ethnically diverse composition, the team was celebrated in France as a symbol of social diversity, representing a multicultural nation. The definition of who is part of a nation has broadened to include individuals who would once not have been considered as genuine French nationals. The French team is also dispersed geographically, with few players having any tie to a French **[p. 258 ↓ ]** club. Of the 22 players in France's squad for the World Cup of 1998, 15 played in leagues outside France and the proportion of the squad playing outside France increased even further by 2000 (Mignon 2000: 232). Other national football teams have also exploited the pool of players once considered ineligible. This is a strategy particularly popular with weaker footballing nations. Thus, under Jack Charlton, the English 1966 World Cup winner selected to manage the Republic of Ireland team on the same competitive grounds that Eriksson was later chosen as English manager, the Irish side fielded players who tenuously qualified for the team by the possession of a single grandparent of Irish birth, such as Andy Townsend and Tony Cascarino. National teams have effectively transnationalized to include individuals who were not once part of the nation. Echoing the Football Association's decision to employ Eriksson, there has been a developing trend in world football for national teams to be coached by foreign managers. Scotland temporarily and unsuccessfully hired German coach Berti Vogts, while South Korea employed the Dutch coach Guus Hiddink for the 2002 World Cup, who led them to the semi-finals of that competition. The European Championships of 2004 were won by outsiders Greece, coached by a German, Otto Rehagel.<sup>5</sup> The economic pressures of globalization are forcing national institutions to develop new strategies which drive them

beyond established national borders. National institutions expand their operations in the face of increased global competition and they draw upon new transnational connections to maximize their competitiveness.

## Conclusion

Like the nation-state, nationalism is changing not dying. Globalization engenders uneven development within national communities so that there are increasing disparities of economic wealth and interest between cities and regions that were regulated in the past by an overarching state. Certainly, in the twentieth century, state regulation did not destroy all regional inequality but through programmes of macro-economic management, welfare and subsidy, it limited the worst of the effects of this unevenness. In the light of global economic forces, nation-states have been unable to mitigate against the effects of uneven development and the nation-state is being compromised internally and externally. Externally, the borders of the nation-state are becoming more porous as new flows of immigrants and capital subvert national boundaries and as states draw into ever-closer intergovernmental alliances with other states, pooling and sharing sovereignty. Internally, nations are fissuring in the face of economic pressure that promotes the independence of cities and regions. The state remains a critical political institution and nations remain primary social communities. Yet, both state and nation are undergoing profound transformation. In particular, although the nation appeals to an unbroken past and therefore appears as a primordial solidarity which has never changed, national communities are, in fact, undergoing radical transformation as they respond to new pressures and threats. Nations are becoming new kinds of solidarities, concentrating on core communities which include those who were once not part of the nation. In the name of putatively timeless nationalism, new national communities, like the English, the Scottish, the Welsh, the Catalan or the Lombardian, are emerging. Nations are localizing and transnationalizing.

The transformation of the nation-state and nationalism can be traced through almost any social activity. Not unreasonably, it has been traditional to trace these changes through formal political activities and institutions. Yet, the transformation of the nation today can be equally well identified through informal social activities and above all through an activity like sport, even though sport appears otiose to the grand sweep

of human history. Yet, in the ritual of sport, humans create and sustain the social groups of which they are part and consequently in this ritual the contours of national communities are thrown into relief. The recent and continuing transformation of sport and of European football, in particular, is especially striking in this regard for, there, in [p. 259 ↓] microcosm, the outlines of new kinds of national communities can begin to be seen. European football today demonstrates the enduring importance of the nation as a basis of social solidarity and mobilization but it also reveals quite radical changes to the nation as a community. Nations are localizing under the pressure of globalization which is also simultaneously forcing them to transnationalize. In the world of sport, the new solidarities to which fans appeal provide a rich and pre-emptive insight into the new geography of nations and nationalism.

## Notes

1 England team strip (or uniform) from 1872 to 2006 can be viewed at <http://www.Englandfootballonline.com/TeamUnif/Unif.html>.

2 <http://www.umbro.com/corporate/130602.htm>.

3 <http://www.umbro.com/corporate/130602.htm> (accessed September 2004).

4 <http://www.Englandfootballonline.com/TeamUnif/unif.html> (accessed 25 September 2004).

5 The process is not confined to football. Britain's Olympic rowing team employed Jürgen Grobber who had coached the East German rowing team to successive Olympic gold medals since 1972. The English cricket team is coached by an Australian, Duncan Fletcher. In other sports, very broad definitions of national identity have been applied to determine whether an athlete has qualified for national selection. The British Olympic athletics team included an American, Maliki David, who was part of the men's relay team which eventually beat the American team to the gold medal in the 2004 Olympics. Similarly, the tennis player, Greg Rusedski, and the world champion boxer, Lennox Lewis, are both Canadians who have sought to exploit their tenuous familial links to Britain into order to maximize their market potential.

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